



One Small Candle: The Pilgrims' First Year in America

Thomas J. Fleming

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This vivid, deeply moving book begins in London in 1620 as Pilgrim representatives sign a contract to purchase the freighter *Mayflower*. We accompany them on their harrowing voyage across the Atlantic, through the rigors of the first New England winter and the threat of Indian attack as they desperately search for the homesite they eventually find at Plymouth. Once at Plymouth they must continue the struggle against brutal weather and disease.

But the story is by no means entirely grim and solemn. Young explorers get lost in the woods and climb trees to escape "roaring lions." There is a comic duel for the hand of a headstrong fifteen-year-old. We are present at a bizarre visit to the great Indian chief, Massasoit.

With masterly skill, Mr. Fleming gives us life-size portraits of the Pilgrim leaders. The Pilgrims' unique achievements--the Mayflower Compact, their tolerance for other faiths, the strict separation of church and state--are discussed in the context of the first year's anxieties and crises. Special attention is given to the younger men who emerged in this first year as the real leaders of the colony--William Bradford and Miles Standish. And new insights are provided into the deep humanity and tolerance of the Pilgrims' spiritual shepherd, Elder William Brewster.

On the first Thanksgiving, there is already in the Pilgrim mind a dawning consciousness that they are the forerunners of a great nation. It is implicit in William Bradford's words "As one small candle may light a thousand, so the light kindled here has shone unto many...."

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